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29.03.2016



Honorable President Reif;
Dear Faculty and Scientists;
Dear Fellows and Alumni of the Luys Foundation;

I am honored to be here at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology—one of the world's top universities. I am grateful to you for hosting me and my colleagues today. With a wealth of teaching tradition, innovative ideas, and achievements, your Institute has made an essential contribution to the development of humanity.

In the 155 years of its existence, this Institute has not only withstood and adapted to, but also become a leader of constant progress and change. This is confirmed by your numerous inventions, achievements, and Nobel Prizes.

By the way, I am very glad that today the President of the Institute expressed the opinion that one of the graduates of the MIT will certainly win the Noble Prize. Mr. Noubar Afeyan was a witness there.

Importantly, your work turns into practical projects that benefit the entire world. I am glad that in recent years about two dozen Armenian students have become members of this Great Family.

Capacities and opportunities of your technological labs are remarkable. I just saw it myself; it was very impressive and educational for me. Of course, I hear about a lot of things; but to hear is one thing, to see is another. As a matter of fact, the methodology of the Institute's Lego Educational Lab is replicated at the Tumo Center for Creative Technologies in Yerevan, which aims at bringing out the intellectual capacity of children and young people and enhancing their competitiveness.

Cooperation of the Armenian partners with the media labs at the MIT has enriched Armenia's education with innovative ideas and programs. The Ayb School founded in Armenia is indeed a product of such cooperation. Our quest for the new contents of education and the creation of environments has been strongly influenced by such well-known scholars as Seymour Papert and Bill Mitchell. This year, we've launched two fablabs in Armenia, which provide ample opportunities for innovation and creativity to the Armenian young people interested in engineering and technologies. The "flipped classroom" program developed here at the MIT has been implemented very productively in Armenia, truly changing the perceptions of students and faculty about the modern education.

Dear Friends;

Daron Acemoğlu, a very bright representative of your Institute, recently developed a theory that became famous around the world. His major argument is that economic prosperity essentially depends on the institutional development or, to be more precise, on the inclusiveness of economic and political institutions. Poverty and other evils affecting society can be defeated through these very institutions.

We have acquired experience that proves the validity of these arguments. It is very hard to carry out a reform if public trust in fairness has been undermined, or if public institutions do not reflect the true aspirations of society. It is very difficult to strengthen institutions if people do not have faith in their effectiveness, in the rule of law, and equality of all before the law – with no exception.

But who can strengthen the institutions if not people themselves? Throughout my political career, I've never had any doubt that the citizens of Armenia are bright and extraordinary individuals. The time has come for this creative potential to bear fruits.

I dream of Armenia where strong and well-established individuals do not spare efforts for creating stable state and public institutions. It will come true only if they are convinced that these institutions belong to each and every one of them. It is not the first time I speak about it publicly. Moreover, we are working consistently toward the implementation of this vision in Armenia.

Recently, we've made major amendments to our Constitution. The next one and half to two years will be

extremely important in this context, because our country is going through a systemic change.

I am confident that these efforts will be productive and visible for our people. We will achieve it through our political will, and with Armenian citizens who take initiative, aspire, and are dedicated to their homeland. We will achieve it through the will of every citizen of Armenia. We all have to bring our share to this initiative.

I hope that we will be able to prove the validity of Daron Acemoğlu's theory. I also hope that he receives the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences and once again brings acclaim to your Institute.

Dear Scientists,

The Republic of Armenia has been independent for a quarter of a century, having traveled a complex and complicated path of development. Our state-building process has been accompanied by a disastrous earthquake, a war and a blockade imposed on us by our neighbors, and regional turmoil. They, together with scarce natural resources, have limited the development prospects of our country. But they have also provided an opportunity to build a state anchored in a democratic system and a knowledge-based economy.

The difficulties certainly pose obstacles, but they have not stalled our progress; they have not broken the Armenian people's will to build the homeland of our dreams. Our neighbors have closed our borders, but they have not been able to curtail the advance of our intellect. Natural resources tend to expire, while human resources tend to generate.

I am glad that young people in my country are actively engaged in discussions on high-tech achievements, research and development, and are contributing to future progress. Our universities annually educate 2,000 IT and high-tech specialists.

It is through human capital that Armenia has earned its place on the IT map of the world. Solutions developed by the Armenian professionals are now widely used in various countries around the world.

Armenia has a number of competitive advantages in this field. We are fully aware that a strong educational foundation is the key to longevity of this success. The mission of our education system is to produce students and researchers who keep up with the latest international achievements.

I am proud that our schoolchildren have recently achieved excellent results in the international subject Olympiads. Last year, Armenian schoolchildren earned 20 medals—5 silver and 15 bronze—in international Olympiads in mathematics, physics, astronomy, and biology. We had similar performance in the past: 19 medals in 2014, 15 medals in 2013, and 16 medals in 2012. These are significant numbers for a small country like Armenia. I am really proud in our schoolchildren: their achievements are greater by large than the awards earned by our immediate neighbors in the South Caucasus. In fact, these numbers are close to the number of medals won by countries that exceed Armenia ten-fold in terms of population.

The National Program for Educational Excellence is being implemented in partnership with the University of Cambridge and the Institute of Education at the University College London. The program aims at making advanced education accessible for all Armenian schoolchildren. The program will educate and train thousands of teachers. The program will be implemented under a new educational platform called Ararat Baccalaureate. It is an Armenian-language system that is based on the international criteria and best reflects top achievements of the global education and rich traditions of the Armenian schooling which is based on our national values. This year, the Armenian graduates will take for the first time the Ararat Baccalaureate's international Armenian-language exam administered in Armenia.

To educate a competitive new generation, we have created the Luys Foundation that provides scholarships to Armenian young people admitted to the world's leading universities. Of course, there was a concern that we might lose our human resources. However, as I was once told by the late Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore that even if our compatriots do not return home after their studies, they are still our assets abroad, through whom the world recognizes our country; they contribute in various ways to the development of both the host country and their home country.

This is quite true in the case of Armenia. Achievements of our compatriots outside of Armenia are our achievements, as well. Their reputation is an essential factor in promoting Armenia's international standing.

Experience has proved that the absolute majority of the Luys's alumni returned home after completing their education and engaged themselves in Armenia's development. It's a fact.

Our young people currently studying in the top U.S. universities are present here today. I am glad to see all of you in high spirits and a determined look in your eyes. I wish success to all of you in your important work. As we were developing the idea to create the Luys Foundation and fund the education of our young people admitted to the world's top universities, we had one goal in mind: to bring home all progressive and new that is constantly created around the world, studied and developed in the world's leading scientific centers. "Home" includes each and every one of you—our extended family called Armenians and Armenia. I believe that every one of the Luys's alumni, having received the best education in top universities, ought to do three things in his or her life: have a house in Armenia, work or be engaged in an Armenia-based initiative in his or her professional field, and be a lifelong "ambassador" of Armenia and the Armenian language everywhere he or she goes.

For quite some time, we have been implementing a program of targeted government assistance in Armenia called Affordable Houses for Young Families. Through affordable mortgage loans at below-market rates, we enable young families to purchase an apartment with all modern amenities. Please, keep in mind that the officials in charge of this program are waiting for you, and it is the first office you should visit in Yerevan once you finish your studies.

Dear Friends;

We are now working to forge mutually-reinforcing ties between universities, R&D, and labor market. I am grateful to the dozens of representatives of the impressive pool of Armenian American scientists who accepted my invitation to be present here today from all corners of the USA. I am confident that you have no regrets, and just like me, you take inspiration from the achievements of the Luys's current scholarship-recipients and alumni.

I am confident that this meeting will pave the way for lasting and practical ties. Many of you do not closely cooperate with the traditional Armenian organizations, parties, or at times even the community. I hope that contacts in this format can become regular and set the foundation for your mutually-beneficial everyday cooperation by creating an informal network of Armenian American scientists.

This meeting is also important in terms of forging close cooperation between Armenian and foreign universities.

We would also be delighted to host MIT faculty and students in Armenia. You could learn about our achievements firsthand, interact with our faculty and students, and visit Armenian IT companies and free economic zones.

Our dream is to promote technological higher education in Armenia in cooperation with the world's top universities. In this context, your engagement and support would be very valuable. We have enabled the brightest of our youth to be competitive by studying at the world's top universities. We would now like to create similar opportunities for all young people in Armenia.

We plan to host a World Forum of Information Technologies in Armenia in 2019. We would be glad if your Institute was represented at this large-scale event. Given your experience, knowledge, and achievements in this field, I am confident that your participation will greatly benefit the Forum.

In conclusion, I wish to recognize Doctor Nubar Afeyan who is present here today. Thank you for the financial support to today's event and for brilliantly moderating this scholarly discussion. Thank you, Mr. Afeyan, also for your dedication to the Armenian Homeland and your hard work.

Thank you for this warm reception. I wish everyone present here new surges of your creative minds, scientific revolutionary ideas, and multiple discoveries.

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